

Montana Water Court
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IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
UPPER MISSOURI DIVISION
CUT BANK CREEK BASIN 41L

* * * * *

CLAIMANT: Northstar Farms Inc.

41L-0008-I-2022

41L 30126469

OBJECTORS: Blackfeet Tribe; United States of America
(Bureau of Indian Affairs)

NOTICE OF FILING OF MASTER'S REPORT

This Master's Report was filed with the Montana Water Court on the above stamped date. Please review this report carefully.

You may file a written objection to this Master's Report within **10 days** of the stamped date if you disagree or find errors with the Master's findings of fact, conclusions of law, or recommendations. Rule 23, W.R.Adj.R. If the Master's Report was mailed to you, the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure allow an additional 3 days be added to the 10-day objection period. Rule 6(d), M.R.Civ.P. If you file an objection, you must serve a copy of the objection to all parties on the service list found at the end of the Master's Report. The original objection and a certificate of mailing to all parties on the service list must be filed with the Water Court.

If you do not file a timely objection, the Water Court will conclude that you agree with the content of this Master's Report.

MASTER'S REPORT

Statement of the case

The Blackfeet Tribe and the United States of America (Bureau of Indian Affairs) each filed objections to all elements of domestic claim 41L 30126469.

Claim 41L 30126469 appeared in the Preliminary Decree with a notice issue remark concerning lack of its inclusion in the previous 41L decree. Issue remarks result from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation ("DNRC") claims examination.

Montana law requires the Water Court to resolve objections and issue remarks.

On May 1, 2023, the parties filed a Stipulation for the Resolution of Objections. The agreement of the parties mooted the pending motion for additional time to resolve the case.

Issues

1. Should the court accept the stipulated terms?
2. Is the notice issue remark on claim 41L 30126469 resolved?

Finding of fact

The priority date of domestic claim 41L 30126469 should be April 15, 1940.

Principles of law

1. A properly filed Statement of Claim for Existing Water Right is prima facie proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA. Prima facie proof may be overcome by other evidence that proves, by a preponderance of the evidence, that an element of the prima facie claim is incorrect. This is the burden of proof for every assertion that a claim is incorrect. Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R. A preponderance of the evidence is a "modest standard" and is evidence that demonstrates the fact to be proved is "more probable than not." *Hohenlohe v. State*, 2010 MT 203, ¶ 33, 357 Mont. 348, 240 P.3d 628.

2. The Montana Water Court is permitted to use information submitted by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the statement of claim, information

from approved compacts, and any other data obtained by the Court to evaluate water right claims. Section 85-2-231(2), MCA.

3. Settlement, including the documents filed by a claimant where the claimant is the only party, is subject to review and approval by the Water Court. Rule 17(a), W.R.Adj.R.

4. The Water Court may accept a settlement agreement that reduces or limits an element of a claim and need not determine whether the burden of proof is met unless there is an unresolved issue remark on the claim. Rule 17(c), W.R.Adj.R.

5. When resolving issue remarks, the Montana Water Court must weigh the information resulting in the issue remark and the issue remark against the claimed water right. Section 85-2-247(2), MCA.

6. The Montana Water Court has the authority to resolve issue remarks when the claim file and information available to the Court provide a sufficient basis to do so. Section 85-2-248(3), MCA.

Analysis

Issue 1 – acceptance of stipulated terms

The parties stipulated to a reduced priority date for claim 41L 30126469.

Conclusions of law

The evidence entered into the record is a reduction within the parameters of statement of claim 41L 30126469, justifies the modification to the claim, and resolves the objections to the claim. The stipulated terms should be accepted by the court.

Issue 2 – notice issue remark resolution

Claim 41L 30126469 appeared in the Preliminary Decree with the following issue remark:

THIS CLAIM NUMBER WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE BASIN 41L DECREE ISSUED 10/08/2015.

Water users were given the opportunity to review the claim and file an objection. The deadline to file objections expired. These proceedings resolve the only objection

filed to the claim.

Conclusion of law

The referenced issue remark served its notice purpose.

Recommendations

Domestic claim 41L 30126469 should be modified as follows to accurately reflect historical use.

PRIORITY DATE:

~~SEPTEMBER 1, 1936~~

APRIL 15, 1940

The notice issue remark should be removed from the claim abstract.

A Post Decree Abstract of Water Right Claim accompanies this report to confirm implementation of the recommendations in the state's centralized water right record system.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Service via USPS Mail

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Service List Updated 5/4/2023

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**POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
CUT BANK CREEK
BASIN 41L**

Water Right Number: 41L 30126469 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 2 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: NORTHSTAR FARMS INC
PO BOX 661
CUT BANK, MT 59427 0661

Priority Date: APRIL 15, 1940

Type of Historical Right: USE

Purpose (use): DOMESTIC

Flow Rate: 10.00 GPM

Volume: 13.50 AC-FT

Households: 1

Maximum Acres: 5.00

Source Name: GROUNDWATER

Source Type: GROUNDWATER
ALSO KNOWN AS WELL NO. 1

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NWNWNE	11	33N	7W	GLACIER

Period of Diversion: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Diversion Means: WELL

Period of Use: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Place of Use:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1	5.00		NWNWNE	11	33N	7W	GLACIER

Total: 5.00

Remarks:

THIS WATER RIGHT IS LOCATED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, WITHIN THE BOUNDARY OF THE BLACKFEET INDIAN RESERVATION.